12

VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

BY

M. K. GANDHI

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By
M. K. GANDHI

Compiled by
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R. K. P.

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CHAPTER 1

WHY THE VILLAGE INDUSTRIES MOVEMENT

I have no doubt in my mind that we add to the national wealth if we help the small-scale industries. I have no doubt also that true Swadeshi consists in encouraging and reviving these home industries. That alone can help the dumb millions. It also provides an outlet for the creative faculties and resourcefulness of the people. It can also usefully employ hundreds of youths in the country who are in need of employment. It may harness all the energy that at present runs to waste. I do not want anyone of those who are engaged in more remunerative occupations to leave them and take to the minor industries. Just as I did with regard to the spinning wheel, I would ask only those who suffer from unemployment and penury to take to some of these industries and add a little to their slender resources.

Cent Per Cent Swadeshi, p. 5, Edn. 1958

The idea behind the village industries scheme is that we should look to the villages for the supply of our daily needs and that, when we find that some needs are not so supplied, we should see whether with a little trouble and organization, they cannot be profitably supplied by the villagers. In estimating the profit, we should think of the villager, not of ourselves. It may be that, in the initial stages, we might have to pay a little more than the ordinary price and get an inferior article in the bargain.

Things will improve, if we will interest ourselves in the supplier of our needs and insist on his doing better and take the trouble of helping to do better.

Harijan, 23-11-1934, p. 324

This is a constructive, not a destructive, programme. The big industries can never, they don't hope to, overtake the unemployed millions. Their aim is primarily to make money for the few owners, never the direct one of finding employment for the unemployed millions. The organizers of Khadi and other village industries don't hope in the near future to affect the big industries. They may hope to bring a ray of light into the dark dungeons, miscalled cottages, of the villagers. . . . They are designed to *well utilize* the leisure hours of the idle millions.

In this there is *no* war against the misuse and abuse of machinery, i.e. its use to the detriment of the millions. Dead machinery must not be pitted against the millions of living machines represented by the villagers scattered in the seven hundred thousand villages of India. Machinery to be well used has to help and ease human effort. The present use of machinery tends more and more to concentrate wealth in the hands of a few in total disregard of millions of men and women whose bread is snatched by it out of their mouths. The movement represented by the A.I.S.A. and the A.I.V.I.A. has been conceived so as to minimize the evil wrought by the craze for amassing large fortunes through the use of dead tools in order to avoid having to deal with very sensitive human tools.

Harijan, 14-9-1935

I would say that if the village perishes, India will perish too. It will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost. The revival of the village is possible only when it is no more exploited. Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villagers as the problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore, we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing mainly for use. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools that they can make and can afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others.

Harijan, 29-8-1936, p. 226

There is no doubt in my mind that in a country like ours, teeming with millions of unemployed, something is needed to keep their hands and feet engaged in order that they may earn an honest living. It is for them that Khadi and cottage industries are needed. It is clear to me as daylight that they are badly needed at the present moment. What the future has in store for them, I do not know, nor do I care to know. . . . These little things add substantially to the income of the poor villagers. If you can ensure them three annas instead of the three pice that they get today, they will think they have won Swaraj. That is what Khadi is trying to do for the spinners today.

Harijan, 2-1-1937

The conception underlying both the Nai Talim and the village industries programme, including

Khaddar, was rooted in the same thing, viz., concern for the dignity and status of the village unit as against the big cities and of the individual against the machine. The concern was further augmented by the fact that India lives not in a handful of her big cities but in her 7,00,000 villages. The problem was of re-establishment of justice between the town and the village. As it was, the balance was heavily tipped in favour of the former to the disadvantage of the latter.

Harijan, 25-8-1946

CHAPTER 2

CAUSES OF DECLINE OF VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

We eat mill-ground flour, and even the poor villager walks with a head-load of half a maund grain to have it ground in the nearest flour mill. Do you know that in spite of the plenty of foodstuffs we produce we import wheat from outside and we eat the 'superfine' flour from Australia? We will not use our hand-ground flour, and the poor villager also foolishly copies us. We thus turn wealth into waste, nectar into poison. For whole meal is the proper meal. Mill-ground flour is vitaminless flour, mill-ground flour kept for days is not only vitaminless, but poison. But we will not exert ourselves to produce flour which we must eat fresh every day, and will pay for less nutritious things and purchase ill-health in the bargain. This is not any abstruse economic truth, it is a fact, which is daily happening before our eyes. The same is the

case with rice and *gur* and oil. We will eat rice, polished of its substance, and eat less nutritious sugar and pay more for it than more nutritious *gur*. We have suffered the village oilman to be driven to extinction and we eat adulterated oils. We idolize the cow, but kill her by slow degrees. We eat honey and kill the honey-bee, with the result that honey is such a rare commodity today that it is only available to a 'Mahatma' like me or to those who must have it from the physician as a vehicle for the drugs he prescribes. If we took the trouble of learning scientific and harmless bee-keeping, we should get it cheaper and our children would get out of it all the carbo-hydrates they need. In all our dietetics, we mistake the shadow for the substance, preferring bone-white sugar to rich brown *gur* and pale white bread to rich brown bran-bread.

We are said to be a nation of daily bathers. That we are, to be sure, but we are none the better for it. For we bathe with unclean water, we foul our tanks and rivers with filth and use that water for drinking and bath. We lawyers and degree-holders and doctors will not learn the elementary principles of sanitation and hygiene. We have not yet devised the most economic method of disposal of our evacuations and we turn our open healthy spaces into breeding grounds of disease.

I implore you to throw off your inertia, to bestir yourselves to study these elementary facts and live more rational lives and learn how to turn waste into wealth. I have told you simple truths which we would soon realize and act up to if we threw off the inertia of ages. But we have shunned body-labour

to the detriment of our brains, and thus rest content with the irrational ways of diet and living. Let us pull ourselves together and resolve to make our bodies and brains more active.

Harijan, 11-5-1935

Any country that exposes itself to unlimited foreign competition can be reduced to starvation and therefore, subjection if the foreigners desire it. This is known as peaceful penetration. One has to go only a step further to understand that the result would be the same as between hand-made goods and those made by power-driven machinery. We are seeing the process going on before our eyes. Little flour mills are ousting the *chakki*, oil mills the village *ghani*, rice mills the village *dhenki*, sugar mills the village *gur*-pans, etc. This displacement of village labour is impoverishing the villagers and enriching the moneyed men. If the process continues sufficiently long, the villagers will be destroyed without any further effort. No Chengis Khan could devise a more ingenious or more profitable method of destroying these villages. And the tragedy of it all is that the villagers are unconsciously but none the less surely contributing to their own destruction. To complete the tale of their woe, let the reader know that even cultivation has ceased to be profitable. For some crops, the villager does not cover even the cost of seed.

Harijan, 20-6-1936

CHAPTER 3

DANGERS OF MECHANIZATION

Mechanization is good when the hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is the case in India. . . . The problem with us is not how to find leisure for the teeming millions inhabiting our villages. The problem is how to utilize their idle hours, which are equal to the working days of six months in the year. Strange as it may appear, every mill generally is a menace to the villagers. I have not worked out the figures, but I am quite safe in saying that every mill-hand does the work of at least ten labourers doing the same work in their villages. In other words, he earns more than he did in his village at the expense of ten fellow-villagers. Thus spinning and weaving mills have deprived the villagers of a substantial means of livelihood. It is no answer in reply to say that they turn out cheaper, better cloth, if they do so at all. For, if they have displaced thousands of workers, the cheapest mill cloth is dearer than the dearest Khadi woven in the villages. Coal is not dear for the coal miner who can use it there and then nor is Khadi dear for the villager who manufactures his own Khadi. But if the cloth manufactured in mills displaces village hands, rice mills and flour mills not only displace thousands of poor women workers, but damage the health of the whole population in the bargain. Where people have no objection to taking flesh diet

and can afford it, white flour and polished rice may do no harm, but in India, where millions can get no flesh diet even where they have no objection to eating it, if they can get it, it is sinful to deprive them of nutritious and vital elements contained in whole wheat meal and unpolished rice. It is time medical men and others combined to instruct the people on the danger attendant upon the use of white flour and polished rice. . . .

Hence the function of the All-India Village Industries Association must, in my opinion be to encourage the existing industries and to revive, where it is possible and desirable, the dying or dead industries of villages according to the village methods, i.e., the villages working in their own cottages as may have done from times immemorial. These simple methods can be considerably improved as they have been in hand-ginning, hand-carding, hand-spinning and hand-weaving.

A critic objects that the ancient plan is purely individualistic and can never bring about corporate effort. This view appears to me to be very superficial. Though articles may be manufactured by villagers in their cottages, they can be pooled together and profits divided. The villagers may work under supervision and according to plan. The raw material may be supplied from common stock. If the will to co-operative effort is created, there is surely ample opportunity for co-operation, division of labour, saving of time and efficiency of work. All these things are today being done by the All-India Spinners' Association in over 5,000 villages.

Harijan, 16-11-1934

When production and consumption both become localized, the temptation to speed up production, indefinitely and at any price, disappears. All the endless difficulties and problems that our present-day economic system presents, too, would then come to an end. Take a concrete instance. England today is the cloth shop of the world. It, therefore, needs to hold a world in bondage to secure its market. But under the change that I have envisaged, she would limit her production to the actual needs of her 45 millions of population. When that need is satisfied, the production would necessarily stop. It won't be continued for the sake of bringing in more gold irrespective of the needs of a people and at the risk of their impoverishment. There would be no unnatural accumulation of hoards in the pockets of the few, and want in the midst of plenty in regard to the rest, as is happening today, for instance, in America. America is today able to hold the world in fee by selling all kinds of trinkets, or by selling her unrivalled skill, which she has a right to do. She has reached the acme of mass production, and yet she has not been able to abolish unemployment or want. There are still thousands, perhaps millions of people in America who live in misery, inspite of the phenomenal riches of the few. The whole of the American nation is not benefited by this mass production.

Harijan, 2-11-1934, p. 302

Well, now the economics and civilization of a country where the pressure of population on land is greatest are and must be different from those of a country where the pressure is least. Sparsely populated, America may have need of machinery. India may not

need it at all. Where there are millions upon millions of units of idle labour, it is no use thinking of labour-saving devices. If someone devised a machine which saved us the trouble of using our hands to eat, eating would cease to be a pleasure, it would become a torture. The reason of our poverty is the extinction of our industries and our consequent unemployment. Some years ago India's agricultural population was said to be 70 per cent. Today it is said to be 90 per cent. It does not mean that 90 per cent are agriculturists, but that instead of 70 per cent who depended on land, 90 per cent are now driven to depend on land. In other words, whereas there were industries and crafts enough to feed the 20 per cent some time ago, these are no longer there and the people have thus been thrown on land. They thus steal their living, not because they want to, but because there is no more land.

Harijan, 11-5-1935

I have no partiality for return to the primitive method of grinding and husking for the sake of them. I suggest the return, because there is no other way of giving employment to the millions of villagers who are living in idleness. In my opinion, village uplift is impossible, unless we solve the pressing economic distress. Therefore, to induce the villagers to utilize their idle hours is in itself solid uplift work.

Harijan, 30-11-1934

CHAPTER 4

REHABILITATION OF VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

We may profess to gratuitously help textile, sugar and rice mills and, respectively, kill the village spinning wheel, the handloom and their product, Khadi, the village cane crusher and its product, the vitamin-laden and nourishing *gur* or molasses and the hand-pounder and its product, unpolished rice, whose pericarp, which holds the vitamins, is left intact by these pounders. Our clear duty is, therefore, to investigate the possibility of keeping in existence the village wheel, the village crusher and the village pounder, and, by advertising their products, discovering their qualities, ascertaining the condition of the workers and the number displaced by the power-driven machinery and discovering the methods of improving them, whilst retaining their village character, to enable them to stand the competition of the mills. How terribly and criminally we have neglected them! Here, there is no antagonism to the textile or the sugar or the rice mills. Their products must be preferred to the corresponding foreign products. If they were in danger of extinction from foreign competition they should receive the needed support. But they stand in no such need. They are flourishing inspite of foreign competition. What is needed is protection of the village crafts and the workers behind them from the crushing competition of the power-driven machinery, whether it is worked in India or in foreign lands. It may be that Khadi, *gur* and unpolished rice have no intrinsic quality and that

they should die. But, except for Khadi, not the slightest effort has been made, so far as I am aware, to know anything about the fate of the tens of thousands of villagers who were earning their livelihood through crushing cane and pounding rice. Surely, there is in this work enough for an army of patriots. The reader will say, 'But this is very difficult work.' I admit. But it is most important and equally interesting. I claim that this is true, fruitful and cent per cent Swadeshi!

Harijan, 10-8-1934

In a nutshell, of the things we use, we should restrict our purchases to the articles which villages manufacture. Their manufactures may be crude. We must try to induce them to improve their workmanship, and not dismiss them because foreign articles or even articles produced in cities, that is, big factories, are superior. In other words, we should evoke the artistic talent of the villager. In this manner, shall we repay somewhat the debt we owe to them. We need not be frightened by the thought whether we shall ever succeed in such an effort. Within our own times, we can recall instances where we have not been baffled by the difficulty of our tasks when we have known that they were essential for this nation's progress. If, therefore, we as individuals believe that revivification of India's villages is a necessity of our existence, if we believe that thereby only can we root out untouchability and feel one with all, no matter to what community or religion they may belong, we must mentally go back to the villages and treat them as our pattern, instead of putting the city life before them for imitation. If this is the correct

attitude, then, naturally, we begin with ourselves and thus use, say, hand-made paper instead of mill-made, use village reed, whenever possible, instead of the fountainpen or the penholder, ink made in the villages instead of the big factories, etc. I can multiply instances of this nature. There is hardly anything of daily use in the home, which the villagers have not made before and cannot make even now. If we perform the mental trick and fix our gaze upon them, we immediately put millions of rupees into the pockets of the villagers, whereas at the present moment we are exploiting the villagers without making any return worth the name. It is time we arrested the progress of the tragedy. To me, the campaign against untouchability has begun to imply ever so much more than the eradication of the ceremonial untouchability of those who are labelled untouchables. For the city-dweller, the villages have become untouchable. He does not know them, he will not live in them, and if he finds himself in a village, he will want to reproduce the city life there. This would be tolerable, if we could bring into being cities which would accommodate 30 crores of human beings. This is much more impossible than the one of reviving the village industries and stopping the progressive poverty, which is due as much to enforced unemployment as to any other cause.

Harijan, 30-11-1934

These (i.e. village industries other than Khadi) stand on a different footing from Khadi. There is not much scope for voluntary labour in them. Each industry will take the labour of only a certain number of hands. These industries come in as a handmaid to

Khadi. They cannot exist without Khadi, and Khadi will be robbed of its dignity without them. Village economy cannot be complete without the essential village industries such as hand-grinding, hand-pounding, soap-making, paper-making, match-making, tanning, oil-pressing etc. Congressmen can interest themselves in these and, if they are villagers or will settle down in villages, they will give these industries a new life and a new dress. All should make it a point of honour to use only village articles whenever and wherever available. Given the demand, there is no doubt that most of our wants can be supplied from our villages. When we have become village-minded, we will not want imitations of the West or machine-made products, but we will develop a true national taste in keeping with the vision of a new India in which pauperism, starvation and idleness will be unknown.

Constructive Programme, Edn. 1948, p. 14-5

CHAPTER 5

DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY

My difficulties are two. One is whether it is possible to sell hand-made articles as cheaply as machine-made ones. The second is that out of the articles that have been enumerated in the scheme there is hardly any except Khadi which can become universal. They will not, in a large measure, be consumed locally and so will have to be sold in the cities. This is as it should be. The villagers should develop such a high degree of skill that articles prepared by them should command a ready market outside. When our villages

are fully developed there will be no dearth in them of men with a high degree of skill and artistic talent. There will be village poets, village artists, village architects, linguists and research workers. In short there will be nothing in life worth having which will not be had in the villages. Today the villages are dung heaps. Tomorrow they will be like tiny gardens of Eden where dwell highly intelligent folk whom no one can deceive or exploit.

The reconstruction of the villages along these lines should begin right now. That might necessitate some modification of the scheme. The reconstruction of the villages should not be organized on a temporary but permanent basis.

My second difficulty is that in the scheme under question, craft and education have been divorced from each other. Craft, art, health and education should all be integrated into one scheme. Nai Talim is a beautiful blend of all the four and covers the whole education of the individual from the time of conception to the moment of death. Therefore, I would not divide village uplift work into watertight compartments from the very beginning but undertake an activity which will combine all four. Instead of regarding craft and industry as different from education, I will regard the former as the medium for the latter. Nai Talim ought to be integrated into the scheme.

Harijan, 10-11-1946

"Begin with Yourself"

Correspondents have been writing, and friends have been seeing me, to ask me how to begin the village industries work and what to do first.

The obvious answer is, "Begin with yourself and do first that which is easiest for you to do."

This answer, however, does not satisfy the enquirers. Let me, therefore, be more explicit.

Each person can examine all the articles of food, clothing and other things that he uses from day to day and replace foreign makes or city makes, by those produced by the villagers in their homes or fields with the simple inexpensive tools they can easily handle and mend. This replacement will be itself. an education of great value and a solid beginning. The next step will be opened out to him of itself. For instance, say, the beginner has been hitherto using a tooth-brush made in a Bombay factory. He wants to replace it with a village brush. He is advised to use a *babul* twig. If he has weak teeth or is toothless, he has to crush one end of it, with a rounded stone or a hammer, on a hard surface. The other end he slits with a knife and uses the halves as tongue-scrapers. He will find these brushes to be cheaper and much cleaner than the very unhygienic factory-made tooth-brush. The city-made tooth-powder he naturally replaces with equal parts of clean, finely-ground, wood-charcoal and clean salt. He will replace mill-cloth with village-spun Khadi, and mill-husked rice with hand-husked, unpolished rice, and white sugar with village-made *gur*. These I have taken merely as samples already mentioned in these columns. I have mentioned them again to deal with the difficulties that have been mentioned by those who have been discussing the question with me.

Harijan, 25-1-1935

CHAPTER 6

PATTERN OF STATE ASSISTANCE

A suggestion has been made that there should be a separate minister for the work, as, for proper organization, it will occupy all the time of one minister. I dread to make the suggestion, for we have not yet outlived the English scale of expenditure. Whether a minister is separately appointed or not, a department for the work is surely necessary. In these times of scarcity of food and clothing, this department can render the greatest help. The ministers have experts at their disposal through the A. I. S. A. and the A. I. V. I. A. It is possible to clothe today the whole of India in Khadi on the smallest outlay and in the shortest time possible. Each provincial Government has to tell the villagers that they must manufacture their own Khaddar for their own use. This brings in automatic local production and distribution. And there will undoubtedly be a surplus for the cities at least to a certain extent which, in its turn, will reduce the pressure on the local mills. The latter will then be able to take part in supplying the want of cloth in other parts of the world.

How can this result be brought about?

The Governments should notify the villagers that they will be expected to manufacture Khaddar for the needs of their village within a fixed date after which no cloth will be supplied to them. The Governments in their turn will supply the villagers with cotton seed or cotton wherever required, at cost

price and the tools of manufacture also at cost, to be recovered in easy instalments payable in, say, five years or more. They will supply them with instructors wherever necessary and undertake to buy surplus stock of Khaddar, provided that the villagers in question have their cloth requirements supplied from their own manufacture. This should do away with cloth shortage without fuss and with very little overhead charges.

The villages will be surveyed and a list prepared of things that can be manufactured locally with little or no help and which may be required for village use or for sale outside, such for instance, as *ghani*-pressed oil and cakes, burning oil prepared through *ghanis*, hand-pounded rice, *tadgur*, honey, toys, mats, hand-made paper, village soap, etc. If enough care is thus taken the villages, most of them as good as dead or dying, will hum with life and exhibit the immense possibilities they have of supplying most of their wants themselves and of the cities and towns of India.

Then there is the limitless cattle wealth of India suffering from criminal neglect. Goseva Sangh, as yet not properly experienced, can still supply valuable aid.

Without the basic training the villagers are being starved for education. This desideratum can be supplied by the Hindustani Talimi Sangh.

Harijan, 28-4-1946

CHAPTER 7

SPINNING WHEEL—THE LIFE-GIVING SUN

I feel convinced that the revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving will make the largest contribution to the economic and the moral regeneration of India. The millions must have a simple industry to supplement agriculture. Spinning was the cottage industry years ago, and if the millions are to be saved from starvation, they must be enabled to reintroduce spinning in their homes, and every village must repossess its own weaver.

Young India, 21-7-1920

I... claim for the Charkha the honour of being able to solve the problem of economic distress in a most natural, simple, unexpensive and businesslike manner. The Charkha, therefore, is not only not useless... but it is a useful and indispensable article for every home. It is the symbol of the nation's prosperity and, therefore, freedom. It is a symbol not of commercial war but of commercial peace. It bears not a message of ill-will towards the nations of the earth but of good-will and self-help. It will not need the protection of a navy threatening a world's peace and exploiting its resources, but it needs the religious determination of millions to spin their yarn in their own homes as today they cook their food in their own homes. I may deserve the curses of posterity for many mistakes of omission and commission, but I am confident of earning its blessings for suggesting a revival of the Charkha. I stake my all on it. For every revolution of the wheel spins peace, good-will and love. And

with all that, inasmuch as the loss of it brought about India's slavery, its voluntary revival with all its implications must mean India's freedom.

Young India, 8-12-1921

What is claimed for spinning is that:

1. it supplies the readiest occupation to those who have leisure and are in want of a few coppers;
2. it is known to the thousands;
3. it is easily learnt;
4. it requires practically no outlay of capital;
5. the wheel can be easily and cheaply made. Most of us do not yet know that spinning can be done even with a piece of tile and splinter;
6. the people have no repugnance to it;
7. it affords immediate relief in times of famine and scarcity;
8. it alone can stop the drain of wealth which goes outside India in the purchase of foreign cloth;
9. it automatically distributes the millions thus saved among the deserving poor;
10. even the smallest success means so much immediate gain to the people;
11. it is the most potent instrument of securing co-operation among the people.

Young India, 21-8-1924

I have often said that if seven lakhs of the villages of India were to be kept alive, and if peace that is at the root of all civilization is to be achieved, we have to make the spinning wheel the centre of all handicrafts. Thus my faith in the spinning wheel is growing every day and I see it more and more clearly that the Sun of the wheel will alone illumine the planets of other handicrafts. But I go a step further and say that

just as we go on discovering new stars and planets in the vast solar system, even so we shall go on discovering fresh handicrafts every day. But for the sake of this thing, we have to make the spinning wheel the really life-giving Sun.

Harijan, 19-2-1938

CHAPTER 8
TANNING

It is estimated that rupees nine crores worth of raw hide is annually exported from India and that much of it is returned to her in the shape of manufactured articles. This means not only a material, but also an intellectual, drain. We miss the training we should receive in tanning and preparing the innumerable articles of leather we need for daily use.

Tanning requires great technical skill. An army of chemists can find scope for their inventive talent in this great industry. There are two ways of developing it. One for the uplift of Harijans living in the villages and eking out a bare sustenance living in filth and degradation and consigned to the village ghetto, isolated and away from the village proper. This way means part re-organization of villages and taking art, education, cleanliness, prosperity and dignity to them. This means also the application of chemical talent to village uplift. Tanning chemists have to discover improved methods of tanning. The village chemist has to stoop to conquer. He has to learn and understand the crude village tanning, which is still in existence but which is fast dying owing to neglect, not to say want of support. But the crude method

may not be summarily scrapped, at least not before a sympathetic examination. It has served well for centuries. It could not have done so, if it had no merit. The only research I know in this direction is being carried on in Santiniketan, and then it was started at the now defunct Ashram at Sabarmati. I have not been able to keep myself in touch with the progress of the experiment at Santiniketan. There is every prospect of its revival at the Harijan Ashram, which the Sabarmati Ashram has now become. These experiments are mere drops in the ocean of possible research.

Cow-preservation is an article of faith in Hinduism. No Harijan worth his salt will kill cattle for food. But, having become untouchable, he has learnt the evil habit of eating carrion. He will not kill a cow but will eat with the greatest relish the flesh of a dead cow. It may be physiologically harmless. But psychologically there is nothing, perhaps, so repulsive as carrion-eating. And yet, when a dead cow is brought to a Harijan tanner's house, it is a day of rejoicing for the whole household. Children dance round the carcass, and as the animal is flayed, they take hold of bones or pieces of flesh and throw them at one another. As a tanner, who is living at the Harijan Ashram, describing the scenes at his own now forsaken home, tells me the whole family is drunk with joy at the sight of the dead animal. I know how hard I have found it working among Harijans to wean them from the soul-destroying habit of eating carrion. Reformed tanning means the automatic disappearance of carrion-eating.

Well, here is the use for high intelligence and the art of dissection. Here is also a mighty step in the

direction of cow-preservation. The cow must die at the hands of the butcher, unless we learn the art of increasing her capacity of milk-giving, unless we improve her stock and make her male progeny more useful for the field and carrying burdens, unless we make scientific use of all her excreta as manure, and unless, when she and hers die, we are prepared to make the wisest use of her hide, bone, flesh, entrails, etc.

I am just now concerned only with the carcass. It is well to remember here that the village tanner, thank God, has to deal only with the carcass, not the slaughtered animal. He has no means of bringing the dead animal in a decent way. He lifts it, drags it, and this injures the skin and reduces the value of the hide. If the villagers and the public knew the priceless and noble service the tanner renders, they will provide easy and simple methods of carrying it, so as not to injure the skin at all.

The next process is flaying the animal. This requires great skill. I am told that none, not even surgeons, do this work better or more expeditiously than the village tanner does with his village knife. I have inquired of those who should know. They have not been able to show me an improvement upon the village tanner. This is not to say that there is none better. I merely give the reader the benefit of my own very limited experience. The village tanner has no use for the bone. He throws it away. Dogs hover round the carcass whilst it is flayed, and take away some, if not all, of the bones. This is a dead loss to the country. The bones, if powdered fine, apart from their other uses, make valuable manure. What remains

after the dogs have taken away their share is transported to foreign countries and returns to us in the shape of handles, buttons, etc.

The second way is urbanizing this great industry. There are several tanneries in India doing this work. Their examination is outside the scope of this article. This urbanization can do little good to the Harijans, much less to the villages. It is a process of double drain from the villages. Urbanization in India is slow but sure death for her villages and villagers. Urbanization can never support ninety per cent of India's population, which is living in her 7,00,000 villages. To remove from these villages tanning and such other industries is to remove what little opportunity there still is for making skilled use of the hand and the head. And when the village handicrafts disappear, the villagers working only with their cattle on the field, with idleness for six or four months in the year, must, in the words of Madhusudan Das, be reduced to the level of the beast and be without proper nourishment, either of the mind or the body, and, therefore, without joy and without hope.

Here is work for the cent per cent Swadeshi lover and scope for the harnessing of technical skill to the solution of a great problem. The work fells three apples with one throw. It serves the Harijans, it serves the villagers, and it means honourable employment for the middle class intelligentsia who are in search of employment. Add to this the fact that intelligentsia have a proper opportunity of coming in direct touch with the villagers.

Harijan, 7-9-1934

CHAPTER 9

DAIRYING

Criminal negligence is the only cause of the miserable condition of our cattle. Our *pinjrapols*, though they are an answer to our instinct for mercy, are a clumsy demonstration of its execution. Instead of being model dairy farms and great profitable national institutions, they are merely depots for receiving decrepit cattle. Whilst professing the religion of cow protection, we have enslaved the cow and her progeny, and have become slaves ourselves.

Young India, 6-10-1921

An ideal *goshala* would supply the city of its domicile with cheap and wholesome milk from cattle of its own keeping, and cheap and lasting foot-wear not out of slaughtered hide but of the hide of dead cattle. Such a *goshala* will not be on one or two acres of ground in the heart of a city or in its immediate neighbourhood but it would have at some distance, but within easy reach, fifty to a hundred acres of ground where a modern dairy and a modern tannery would be conducted on strictly business but national lines. Thus there would be no profits and no dividends to be paid and there would be also no loss incurred. In the long run such institutions dotted all over India would be a triumph of Hinduism and would be proof of Hindu earnestness about cow, that is, cattle protection and it would provide decent employment for thousands of men including educated men; for both dairy and tannery work requires expert scientific knowledge. Not Denmark but India should

be a model State for the finest dairy experiments, and India should not to her shame have to export nine crore rupees worth of dead cattle hide annually and for her consumption use slaughtered cattle hide. If such a state of things is a shame for India it is a greater shame for Hindus. I wish that all the *Goshala* Committees will take to heart the remarks I made in reply to the Giridih address and make their *goshalas* into ideal dairies and tanneries and a refuge for all worn out and maimed cattle.

Young India, 22-10-1925

Every *goshala* or *pinjrapol* should have a tannery adequate to its needs attached to it. In other words, the manager in charge of every such institution should have a thorough knowledge of the immediate steps necessary for utilizing the remains of dead cattle. If this is done, the question, viz. how many heads of cattle should a particular *goshala* contain, would not arise at all.

I do not know what the rate of mortality of cattle in *goshalas* is nor is it relevant to my proposition. So long as there is a single head of cattle in a *goshala* its manager ought to know how to dispose of its remains after it is dead, just as he is expected to know how to look after it while it is alive.

Such humanitarian institutions for the protection of cattle as I have described should normally take charge of the remains of the cattle that might die in the village. Therein lies the interest of the cattle, the depressed classes and the general public alike. In villages where there are no *goshalas* or the concomitant tanneries, some local person who believes in cow protection should take it upon himself to get

the carcasses removed to the nearest tannery or get the preliminary processes performed upon it and send the useful parts there.

The establishment of such tanneries as I have described does not require much capital outlay. Only some initial expenditure would be needed to train up workers for this work.

Young India, 3-11-1927

CHAPTER 10

GUR AND KHANDSARI

Take the sugar industry. The largest major industry next to the textile is that of the manufacture of sugar. It stands in no need of our assistance. Sugar factories are fast multiplying. Popular agencies have done little to help the growth of this industry. It is indebted for its growth to favourable legislation. And today the industry is so prosperous and expanding that the production of jaggery is becoming a thing of the past. It is admittedly superior to refined sugar in nutritive value. It is this very valuable cottage industry that cries out for your help. This by itself furnishes large scope for research and substantial help. We have to investigate the ways and means of keeping it alive. This is but an illustration of what I mean.

Harijan, 10-8-1934

The advantages, attributed to *tadi*, are all avai able from other foodstuffs. *Tadi* is made out of *khajuri* juice. Fresh *khajuri* juice is not an intoxicant. It is known as *nira* in Hindustani and many people have been cured of their constipation as a result of drinking *nira*. I have taken it myself though it did not act

as a laxative with me. I found that it had the same food value as sugar-cane juice. If one drinks a glass of *nira* in the morning instead of drinking tea etc., he should not need anything else for breakfast. As in the case of sugar-cane juice, palm juice can be boiled to make palm jaggery. *Khajuri* is a variety of palm tree. Several varieties of palm grow spontaneously in our country. All of them yield drinkable juice. As *nira* gets fermented very quickly, it has to be used up immediately and therefore on the spot. Since this condition is difficult to fulfil except to a limited extent, in practice, the best use of *nira* is to convert it into palm jaggery. Palm jaggery can well replace sugar-cane jaggery. In fact some people prefer it to the latter. One advantage of palm jaggery over sugar-cane jaggery is that it is less sweet and therefore one can eat more of it. The All India Village Industries Association has done a great deal to popularize palm jaggery, but much remains to be done. If the palms that are used for making *tadi* are used for making jaggery, India will never lack sugar and the poor will be able to get good jaggery for very little money. Palm jaggery can be converted into molasses and refined sugar. But the jaggery is much more useful than refined sugar. The salts present in the jaggery are lost in the process of refining. Just as refined wheat flour and polished rice lose some of their nutritive value because of the loss of the pericarp, refined sugar also loses some of the nutritive value of the jaggery. One may generalize that all foodstuffs are richer if taken in their natural state as far as possible.

Key to Health, pp. 33-34, Edn. 1956

CHAPTER 11

OTHER VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

Compost Manure

The excreta of animals and human beings mixed with refuse can be turned into golden manure, itself a valuable commodity. It increases the productivity of the soil which receives it. Preparation of this manure is itself a village industry. But this, like all village industries, cannot give tangible results unless the crores of India co-operated in reviving them and thus making India prosperous.

Delhi Diary, pp. 270-71

Given the willing co-operation of the masses of India, this country can not only drive out shortage of food, but can provide India with more than enough. This organic manure ever enriches, never impoverishes the soil. The daily waste, judiciously composted, returns to the soil in the form of golden manure causing a saving of millions of rupees and increasing manifold, the total yield of grains and pulses. In addition, the judicious use of waste keeps the surroundings clean. And cleanliness is not only next to godliness, it promotes health.

Harijan, 28-12-1947

Hand-made Paper

I was told that, if there were enough orders, the paper could be supplied at the same cost as the mill-made article. I know that hand-made paper can never supply the daily growing demand for paper. But lovers of the seven hundred thousand villages

and their handicrafts will always want to use hand-made paper, if it is easily procurable. Those who use hand-made paper know that it has a charm of its own. Who does not know the famous Ahmedabad paper? What mill-made paper can beat it in durability or polish?

The account-books of the old style are still made of that paper. But it is probably a perishing industry like many such others. With a little encouragement, it ought never to perish. If there was supervision, the processes might be improved and the defects that are to be noticed with some of this hand-made paper may be easily removed. The economic condition of the numberless people engaged in these little known trades is well worth investigating. They will surely allow themselves to be guided and advised and feel thankful to those who would take interest in them.

Harijan, 14-9-1934

Machine Oil and Ghani Oil

Shri Jhaverbhai has also examined the cause of the decline of the village *ghani*. The most potent cause is the inability of the oilman to command a regular supply of seeds. The villages are practically denuded of seeds after the season. The oilman has no money to store the seeds, much less to buy them in the cities. Therefore he has disappeared or is fast disappearing. Lakhs of *ghanis* are today lying idle causing a tremendous waste of the country's resources. Surely it is the function of the State to resuscitate the existing *ghanis* by conserving seeds in the places of their origin and making them available to the village oilman at reasonable rates. The Government loses nothing by giving this aid. It can be given, so Shri Jhaverbhai contends,

through co-operative societies or Panchayats. If this is done, Shri Jhaverbhai is of opinion, based on research, that *ghani* oil can compete with the machine product and villager can be spared the infliction of the adulterated oil he gets today. It should be borne in mind that the only fat the villager gets, when he gets any, is what the oils can give him. To *ghee* he is generally a stranger.

He (Shri Jhaverbhai) has found out why this machine oil is at all cheaper than the *ghani* oil. He gives three reasons, two of which are unavoidable. They are capital and the ability of the machine to extract the last drop of oil and that too in a shorter time than the *ghani*. These advantages are neutralized by the commission the owner of this oil mill has to pay to the middleman. But Shri Jhaverbhai cannot cope with the third reason, adulteration, unless he also takes to it. This naturally he will not do. He therefore suggests that adulteration should be dealt with the law. This can be done by enforcing the Anti-Adulteration Act if there is one or by enacting it by licensing oil mills.

Harijan, 2-9-1939

Bee-keeping

Bee-keeping seems to me to possess immense possibilities. Apart from its village value, it may be cultivated as a hobby by moneyed young men and women. They will add to the wealth of the country and produce the finest health-giving sugar for themselves. If they are philanthropically inclined, they can distribute it as health-giving food among sickly Harijan children. There is no reason why it should be a luxury of the rich or an expensive medicinal vehicle

in the hands of the *hakims* and *vaidyas*. No doubt, my hope is based on inferences drawn from meagre data. Experiments that may be made in villages and in cities by young men and women should show whether honey can become a common article of food or has to remain an uncommon article, which it is today.

Harijan, 1-2-1935

Hand-pounding of Rice

In my writing on cent per cent Swadeshi, I have shown how some aspects of it can be tackled immediately with benefit to the starving millions both economically and hygienically. The richest in the land can share the benefit. Thus if rice can be pounded in the villages after the old fashion, the wages will fill the pockets of the rice-pounding sisters and the rice-eating millions will get some sustenance from the unpolished rice instead of pure starch which the polished rice provides. Human greed, which takes no account of the health or the wealth of the people who come under its heels, is responsible for the hideous rice-mills one sees in all the rice-producing tracts. If public opinion was strong, it will make rice-mills an impossibility by simply insisting on unpolished rice and appealing to the owners of rice-mills to stop a traffic that undermines the health of a whole nation and robs the poor people of an honest means of livelihood.

Harijan, 26-10-1934

I regard the existance of power wheels for the grinding of corn in thousands of villages as the limit of our helplessness. I suppose India does not produce all the engines or grinding machines.... The planting

of such machinery and engines on a large scale in villages is also a sign of greed. Is it proper to fill one's pockets in this manner at the expense of the poor? Every such machinery puts thousands of hand-*chakkis* out of work and takes away employment from thousands of housewives and artisans who make these *chakkis*. Moreover, the process is infective and will spread to every village industry. The decay of the latter spells too the decay of art. If it meant replacement of old crafts by new ones, one might not have much to say against it. But this is not what is happening. In the thousands of villages where power machinery exists, one misses the sweet music in the early morning of the grinders at work.

Harijan, 10-3-1946

CHAPTER 12

VILLAGE EXHIBITIONS

If we want and believe that the village should not only survive but also become strong and flourishing, then the village perspective is the only correct view-point. If this is true then in our exhibitions there can be no place for the glamour and pomp of the cities. There should be no necessity for games and other entertainments that belong to the cities. An exhibition should not become a "Tamasha", nor a source of income; it should never become the advertising medium for traders. No sales should be allowed there. Even Khadi and village industry products should not be sold. An exhibition should be a medium of education, should be attractive and it should be such as to infuse

in the villager the impulse to take to some industry or the other. It should bring out the glaring defects and drawbacks in the present day village life, and show methods to be adopted to set them right. It should also be able to indicate the extent of achievement in that direction ever since the idea of village uplift was sponsored. It should also teach how to make village life artistic.

Now let us see what an exhibition will be like if it is to conform to the above conditions.

1. There should be two models of villages—one as is existing today and the other an improved one. The improved village will be clean all throughout. Its houses, its roads, its surroundings and its fields will be all clean. The condition of the cattle should also improve. Books, charts, and pictures should be used to show what industries give increased income and how.

2. It must show how to conduct the various village industries, wherefrom to obtain the needed implements, how to make them. The actual working of each industry should be demonstrated. Along with these the following should also find place:

(a) Ideal village diet

(b) Comparison between village industry and machine industry

(c) Model lessons on rearing animals

(d) Art section

(e) Model of village latrine

(f) Farm-yard manure, *v.* chemical manure

(g) Utilization of hides, bones, etc. of animals

(h) Village music, musical instruments, village dramas

(i) Village games, village *akhadas* and forms of exercise

(j) Nai Talim

(k) Village medicine

(l) Village maternity home

Subject to the policy enunciated in the beginning, this list may be further expanded. What I have indicated is by way of example only, it should not be taken to be exhaustive. I have not made any mention of the Charkha and other village industries as they are taken for granted. Without them the exhibition will be absolutely useless.

Gram Udyog Patrika, July, 1946

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